

# SOCIETY

# 4





# Cultivating dialogue and openness

# In tune with stakeholder expectations ↘

Information and dialogue lie at the heart of ANSES's value and the trust it inspires. To take account of society's concerns and expectations, the Agency has set up dialogue committees on several topics of debate: nanotechnologies, radiofrequencies and plant protection products. In addition to fostering the sharing of information, this proximity demonstrates the Agency's desire for transparency and the requirement it has set itself to stay in tune with society.



**"ANSES has been a pioneer, forging links with stakeholders right from its inception."**



## Three questions for...

### RÉGINE FRAYSSE-BOU TRAIS, SOCIOLOGIST, TASKED WITH DEVELOPING RELATIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

#### What are the positive effects of opening ANSES up to society?

→ ANSES has been a pioneer in this field right from its inception, forging links with stakeholders on emerging societal issues such as environmental health and animal welfare. Over time, thanks to this dialogue, we have seen an increase in the skills and knowledge of stakeholders. Initially, misconceptions about ANSES's work processes and the regulatory framework in which it operates gave rise to tensions and misunderstandings. Openness to society has led to a better understanding of the Agency's opinions and an awareness of the limitations it sometimes faces due to scientific uncertainties or gaps in knowledge.

#### Does this openness have benefits for ANSES?

→ Dialogue improves the Agency's ability to understand societal concerns and makes its expert appraisals more robust as they then take better account of society's doubts and questions about different types of exposure and their effects. This then strengthens the credibility of ANSES's recommendations and its reputation. We are also better able to identify emerging societal expectations, particularly on subjects such as new technologies or plant protection products. Lastly, opening up to all the stakeholders helps the Agency keep its distance from influence and lobbying strategies, for which we have also set up in-house training and awareness-raising initiatives.

#### What are the prospects offered by openness and dialogue?

→ The Agency is just one part of a much larger process of public policy development. We are sometimes the repository for concerns that go beyond the Agency's risk assessment missions or the regulatory framework in which some of them take place. Should new dialogue interfaces be created? Can we imagine ANSES being part of a broader mechanism for consultation and debate with society? These issues are among the themes that will be addressed at the international symposium "Credibility of public expertise and public decision-making" that the Agency is organising in early 2021.

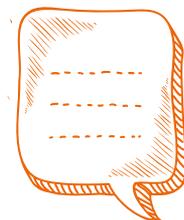
**"Opening up to all the stakeholders helps the Agency keep its distance from influence and lobbying strategies."**

### WHAT IS A STAKEHOLDER?

→ A stakeholder is a person or organisation that can influence, be influenced by, or feel influenced by a decision or activity. In all its areas of activity, ANSES considers associations (of citizens, consumers, patients,

victims, or for environmental or animal protection), professional organisations (including industry representatives), and trade and agricultural unions. These players are all represented on its Board of Administrators.

The Agency is also naturally in contact with public institutions and elected representatives, as well as scientific experts, laboratories and technical institutes.



### THE PILLARS OF ANSES'S OPENNESS TO SOCIETY

→ Its Board of Administrators and thematic steering committees.

→ Dialogue committees on controversial subjects: health risks associated with nanomaterials and risks associated with radiofrequencies (since 2011-2012), platform for dialogue on the issuing of marketing authorisations for plant protection products (since 2017).

→ Hearings, consultations and stakeholder reporting sessions organised during the scientific expert appraisal process, which enable the integration of data and information from organisations with field knowledge, experience or technical information.

→ The charter on openness to society signed in 2011 by seven public research and expert appraisal agencies, including ANSES.

→ The Agency's website, a platform for publishing its scientific reports and opinions.

During 2019, ANSES also chaired a steering and monitoring committee on transverse agenesis of the upper limbs, in conjunction with *Santé publique France* and a dedicated scientific committee.

## Focus

### CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE WORK OF PARLIAMENT

ANSES's work often lies at the heart of the concerns of our fellow citizens and elected officials. As part of its mission to support decision-making, the Agency responds to many parliamentary requests. In 2019, the General Directorate and staff took part in some 50 hearings and meetings with parliamentarians (MPs and senators).

As part of fact-finding missions or investigation committees, or before various study groups, they were given the opportunity to shed light on some of the Agency's work, such as in occupational health and endocrine disruptors, to take stock

of ongoing actions, particularly in the context of the glyphosate withdrawal strategy, or to present certain studies such as its expert appraisals on baby nappies and feminine hygiene products. ANSES was also asked to provide details of the risk assessments conducted following the fire at the Lubrizol plant. All these actions contribute to the work of parliament, in order to revise existing standards, adopt new measures, or address emerging issues. The Agency also appeared before the Economic, Social and Environmental Council to discuss its work relating to animal welfare and the European REACH Regulation on chemicals.



## Four questions for...

### **BERNARD CHEVASSUS-AU-LOUIS,** CHAIR OF THE PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE ON MARKETING AUTHORISATIONS FOR PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS

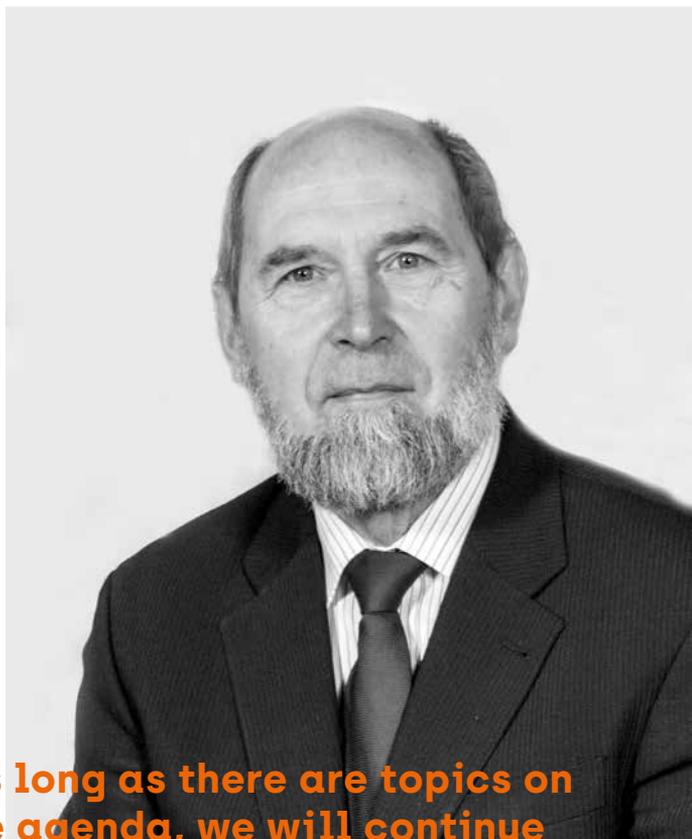
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#### **What is the purpose of the platform set up two years ago?**

→ ANSES wanted to accomplish its missions to the best of its ability, and decided to initiate a dialogue with all civil society organisations and professional representations interested in the issuing of MAs for plant protection products.

The aim of this platform is to enable everyone to do their job better. This is a mutually beneficial offer because in exchange, ANSES provides all these organisations with the information they want.

More than 50 organisations on average take part in this platform's meetings, with one participant per organisation, or two in the case of federations. But more than 150 of them are actually invited. They include plant protection product manufacturers or other players (UIPP), representatives from the agricultural world (unions, technical institutes), associations such as *France Nature Environnement* or *Génération Futures*, and even beekeepers.



**"As long as there are topics on the agenda, we will continue at the rate of two platforms per year."**

## What have been the main topics discussed?

→ We realised that there was a huge need for information and understanding, for example on the definition of the term “substance of low concern”, on pharmacovigilance, or on the respective roles of the European Chemicals Agency and ANSES. Answering these questions has required in-depth work on the part of the ANSES teams. A large part of our session agendas concerns these requests for understanding. As soon as a topic is on the agenda, any of the platform members can present their position or analysis to the others.

Other topics have included regulations on bees and other pollinating insects, coordination between Europe and the Member States, the glyphosate dossier, product application distances, and use of the information platform on plant protection products, for which specific training has been introduced.

## What do you think are the mutual advantages of this type of body?

→ As can be seen from the number of people attending each platform meeting, I think that participants appreciate this type of forum where they can easily speak and ask questions. Regulating all these exchanges is relatively easy and I learn something new at each session. On the other hand, there is still only limited debate between the players in terms of horizontal dialogue. I have the impression that ANSES also finds it beneficial, because it is able to see that subjects that it thought were self-evident are not always so well understood by civil society. I would like to pay tribute to the staff of ANSES, who prepare these meetings very seriously and work hard to provide input for this platform. The participants notice and appreciate it.

## What are the challenges and prospects for the platform's continuity?

→ The platform is not intended to last indefinitely. As long as there are topics on the agenda, we will continue at the rate of two platforms per year. However, plant protection products will probably remain in the spotlight for several years to come. Perhaps ANSES will suggest extending this platform principle to the area of other biocides or veterinary products, if other topics emerge. Lastly, questions about assessing the effects of low doses of plant protection products over a very long period of time, cocktail effects or effects on other living organisms are often raised, and will no doubt still need addressing in the coming years.

# Human and social sciences in risk assessment ↘



The Agency is regularly required to work on highly controversial subjects involving different types of uncertainty, whether scientific, social or political. In order to enhance and improve the quality of its expert appraisals in support of public decision-making, ANSES therefore relies on the human and social sciences (HSS), mobilising experts in these disciplines through working groups and academic partnerships.

The HSS are an integral part of ANSES's risk assessment processes.

They can help provide a better understanding of the behaviours and positions of players with regard to a given risk, or the history, nature and evolution of arguments on controversial situations. They also generate knowledge useful for understanding what determines individual or collective exposure to risk in real life. In addition, they can shed light on critical points of the expert appraisal, particularly in

areas characterised by uncertainty or a lack of knowledge. Lastly, the analysis of socio-economic dimensions, for example in terms of the benefit-risk or even cost-benefit ratio, can help to guide management measures.

While ANSES carries out or assesses studies of the impact of management measures required by the regulatory framework, it also conducts occasional socio-economic studies, whether or not in connection with formal requests. Depending on the topics, sociology, political science, psychology, law, economics, history, philosophy or communication sciences may be mobilised. The expert appraisals drawing on these disciplines meet the same demanding criteria as all the other work produced by ANSES: competence,

transparency, independence and collective expertise.

In 2019, some 15 expert groups set up to deal with formal requests to the Agency therefore included HSS skills, and two expert appraisal reports mobilising these skills were published: one on occupational risks in the waste management and recycling sector, and the other on the use of herbicide-tolerant varieties (HTVs).

ANSES is also working to increase the use of the human and social sciences. Implementing an expert appraisal system that can take socio-economic aspects into consideration for regulated products and formal requests is one of the priorities of ANSES's 2018-2022 goals and performance contract.



## ANALYSIS OF THE CONTROVERSY AND SOCIETAL DEBATE ON THE USE OF HTVs

Herbicide-tolerant varieties (HTVs) are crop varieties that have been developed to be tolerant to a specific herbicide. Given their expansion in France, and in response to public concerns, ANSES reviewed the use of these plant varieties. ANSES's 2019 opinion was formed in the wider context of a debate on the use of biotechnology in agriculture and of the ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union on organisms obtained by mutagenesis, which is likely to have an impact on the regulatory framework.

A twofold analysis was carried out to provide input for the expert appraisal with, on the one hand, a socio-historical comparison of the multiple dimensions (scientific, legal, economic, environmental) of the controversy surrounding the definition, use and control of HTVs, and on the other hand, an exploration of the arguments put forward by opponents and supporters of HTV use. Due to their dissenting positions, the various stakeholders interviewed disagreed on the nature, extent and implementation of monitoring of agricultural practices

associated with HTVs and the potential adverse effects.

ANSES concluded that the limitations of the data collected in terms of their quantity and quality did not enable it to reach a decision on potential adverse effects or to carry out an *a posteriori* assessment of the health, environmental and agronomic risks. Noting the existence of risk factors regarding the potential development of weed resistance and/or increased herbicide use, the Agency recommended improving the traceability of HTV seed use through to when it is ultimately used as crops.

## EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF THE WASTE MANAGEMENT SECTOR

The waste management and recycling industry is central to circular economy policies and is growing all the time. The occupational health of workers in this industry is a real challenge and was examined by ANSES in an initial expert appraisal in 2019. The Agency looked at 28 waste management sectors that provided an overview of the industry.

Several criteria were studied to identify and distinguish the sectors in terms of their impact on the health of professionals working in them: potential risks associated with the toxicity of chemicals and the presence of bacteria or mould in waste;

the level of documentation on these health risks; the quantities of waste produced, collected and processed within each sector; the numbers of workers involved; and consideration of economic and technical developments in the sectors over the coming years. In addition to the lack of data, the expert appraisal highlighted multiple exposures: to chemicals and pathogens found in the waste, noise and mechanical vibrations, and the impact of organisational constraints. Risks to mental health associated with the working conditions, organisation and attitudes to occupations in this sector were also

pointed out. ANSES therefore made recommendations with a view to enhancing knowledge, raising awareness of risk prevention and improving medical monitoring of waste workers. It also recommended that the health impacts on these professionals be integrated into eco-design activities.

Lastly, for the sectors where potential risks have already been identified, ANSES plans to conduct health risk assessments for workers, starting with the household packaging waste sector, with its many health and socio-economic challenges.

# ANSES's governance bodies ↘

ANSES's governance model is designed to reconcile two essential principles: on the one hand, the independence of the scientific expert appraisal process and on the other, transparency, openness and respect for the roles of all parties involved. The composition of the Agency's Board of Administrators therefore reflects the five colleges of the *Grenelle* environmental round table, with representatives of the State, various associations, professional bodies, trade unions and elected officials; it also includes staff representatives. It is supported by five thematic steering committees that also involve Agency stakeholders. Lastly, ANSES's Scientific Board ensures the excellence of its work, while its Committee for Ethical Standards ensures its independence.

## THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATORS

The Board of Administrators decides on ANSES's general policy, including its multi-year strategy, its annual work programme and its goals and performance contract with the State. It deliberates on the Agency's general organisation, the creation of Expert Committees and the establishment of agreements with external organisations, and is involved in setting ethical standards. Half of the voting rights are attributed to the members of the college of State representatives and half to members of the other colleges. In late 2019, the ANSES Board of Administrators was renewed for another three-year term.

Fourteen new members, including representatives of three new consumer associations, were appointed by Ministerial Order on 11 December 2019, published in the Official Journal on 18 December 2019. The ANSES staff representatives, elected by personnel in accordance with the procedures defined by the Agency's internal rules and regulations, were appointed by Ministerial Order in February 2020.

To support it in its mission, the Board of Administrators has set up five **thematic steering committees**. In addition to the colleges represented on the Board of Administrators,

these committees are open to civil society organisations involved in the Agency's spheres of competence: associations, professionals, industry, trade unions, agricultural unions, etc. They help define ANSES's strategic orientations and work programme, and are an important forum for expressing risk assessment and research needs, in five areas: environmental health, occupational health, food, animal health and welfare, and plant health and protection.

## Composition of the Board of Administrators



→ Chairman  
of the Board



→ State  
Representatives



→ Representatives of **Associations**



→ Representatives  
of **Professional Organisations**



→ Representatives  
of **Trade Union** Organisations



→ **Elected Officials**  
and **Qualified Individuals**



→ **Staff** Representatives

## THE SCIENTIFIC BOARD

The Scientific Board guarantees the scientific quality and independence of expert appraisals by choosing experts, reviewing public declarations of interest and monitoring how expert appraisals are conducted. It also oversees the evaluation of the Agency's research activities. It is independent of the Agency's operational bodies and made up exclusively of scientists, giving a considerable number of seats to foreign scientists.

In late 2019, the Scientific Board was renewed for a period of three years. Eleven new members were appointed by Ministerial Order dated 23 December 2019 and thirteen outgoing members were reappointed. The composition of the Scientific Board responds to the need for scientific knowledge and a concern for balance between ANSES's major areas of competence, as well as between the member organisations. With 13 men and 11 women, it is approaching gender parity.

## THE COMMITTEE FOR ETHICAL STANDARDS AND PREVENTION OF CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

The Committee rules on compliance with the ethical standards applicable to ANSES, its staff and occasional employees, in terms of both general rules and specific issues, bearing in mind that in accordance with the law, effective day-to-day implementation of the requirement to prevent conflicts of interest is the responsibility of the Agency's Ethics Officer. The Committee for Ethical Standards can be petitioned by a member of the Board of Administrators, the Scientific Board or a CES, or by the Director General or an ANSES employee. It can intervene in all ANSES's areas of activity at any stage, for example from the formal request through to ANSES's opinion in matters of collective expert appraisal. Its members are appointed for five years by Interministerial Order.